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ABSTRACT

These two 1995 issues of the journal "Offspring," a publication of the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools, cover a variety of topics familiar to nursery school and day care providers including the mission of the publication. Articles are short pieces useful to practitioners and are frequently accompanied by classroom activities. Articles in these two issues include: (1) "Memories and Family Traditions: An Interview with Bev Bos" (by Lisa Mangigian); (2) "Reflections on 'Offspring': The Last Ten Years" (Karen Ensminger); (3) "Dollars and Sense between Children and Parents" (Phyllis J. Wordhouse); (4) "Making Choices Work between Career and Family" (Jody A. Schnetzler); (5) "The Cooperation Games People Play" (Tahia Miller); (6) "Family Meetings: A Time To Reconnect" (Bill Winkler); (7) "Allergic Problems in Children" (by James McDonald); (8) "Have More Fun with Music" (Chuck Hage and Elisa Huss-Hage); (9) "Self-Esteem to the Extreme" (Lilian Katz); and (10) "Practice Makes Perfect Sense: Learning through Play" (Evelyn Peterson). (JW)

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OFFSPRING

Our 35th Year
1995: No. 1

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Offspring is written for parents, teachers and others:
- ❑ **To provide a forum for views on dealing with young children;**
- ❑ **To express a variety of ideas;**
- ❑ **To promote the co-op philosophy;**
- ❑ **To enhance our relationships with children and each other.**

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OFFSPRING

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1995 MCCN Conference Keynote Speaker

Memories and Family Traditions

An Interview with Bev Bos

LISA MANGIGIAN

Our childhood memories—we carry them with us all our lives. Parents, teachers and caregivers are responsible for creating those lifelong memories and traditions. "As we grow older we focus our attention on the things we trusted and believed in when we were children," says Bev Bos. She believes that establishing family traditions is crucial to creating happy childhood memories.

Bos is the Director and Teacher of the Roseville, CA Community Preschool, where she has taught for over 26 years. She is also an author of three books on creativity for young children, a recording artist and lecturer. Bos is the mother of five grown children and grandmother to 13.

Bos will focus on the importance of family traditions and look at the sustaining value of good childhood memories

Lisa Mangigian is an editor for Offspring, *a former co-op parent and a mother of three children.*

as the keynote speaker at the MCCN Conference in April. During an early morning phone interview Boss emanated excitement about this important topic.

Offspring: When did you first realize the importance of family traditions?

Bos: Growing up in a large Midwest family I've always known the importance. About 10 to 15 years ago I started wondering why people were feeling lost. In many families television has replaced traditions. I concluded that we needed hooks to hang onto when life was difficult— traditions.

Offspring: What traditions do your children remember most from their childhood?

Bos: Having dinner together has always been important to our family. Recently a 1988 study highlighted the importance of daily family dinners. When looking for a common thread among high achievers it was found that having dinner together as a family outranked extra curriculars or superior education.

Offspring: Is there a particular age when traditions become especially important to children?

Bos: In many cultures family traditions begin with greeting babies. The early childhood years are crucial: children between the ages of 3 and 6 are forming ideas about the world around them.

Offspring: What traditions have your children established in their own families?

Bos: I probably don't know all of them, but one tradition we continue centers around birthdays. We have a special quilt that we wrap the birthday person in, and then we throw that person in the air. I also have adapted this at the

preschool where I teach. The birthday child sits in a chair and we lift him or her up.

Offspring: Describe some other classroom traditions.

Bos: On the first day of school we all share one apple signifying that we will be together for the year. We also make a special doll each month that the children can decorate. Examples include a sweet potato doll and a wooden doll. Each child also has a "memory box" made from a simple shoe box in which the student can put anything he or she wants. At the end of the year the boxes go home as a tangible reminder of all the special memories of the year.

Offspring: What advice can you offer to our readers who may be hesitant to start new traditions?

Bos: If you are tuned in to the emotions of your family you shouldn't have any problems. Don't force new customs on anyone and refrain from power struggles. Family traditions should encourage a cooperative atmosphere with active participation in the planning stages as well as the actual event.

Offspring: Is there one crucial aspect in establishing family traditions?

Bos: Yes, one member of the family must be committed to building memories through traditions. Money is not important. Simple inexpensive traditions are best. For example, when my children were younger whenever we bought a new jar of peanut butter, we would put their initials on top and say that the " fairy in the light" did it.

Offspring: Will all children view traditions in the same way or will they all have different memories?

Bos: Speaking from my personal experience, I had a difficult childhood; yet I remember the happy times and continue the traditions my mother started. For example, out of

all of my seven siblings I am the only one who bakes rhubarb pie. I hope each child will remember whatever positive traditions he or she was exposed to and carry them on.

Bos hopes Conference attendees will learn how to strengthen their sense of family by using traditions to make their times special and memorable. She recommends the following list of books as resources for families beginning their traditions:

A Celebration of American Family Folklore
Tales and Traditions from the Smithsonian Collection
By Steven Zeitlin, Amy Kotkin, Holly Cutting Baker

New Traditions
By Susan Abel Lieberman

Rituals for our Times
By Janine Roberts, Evan Imber Black

Reflections on Offspring: The Last Ten Years

Katy Arnstein

KAREN ENSMINGER

It was January 1983. My son Alex had graduated from co-op and was now in kindergarten. I had just started The Scrap Box, a nonprofit business that collects and distributes industrial discards, but wanted to do more with my extra time. My good friend Shelley Lane was on the MCCN Board which was looking for a new coordinator for *Offspring Magazine*. She thought it would be great to have someone to ride with every month to the Lansing board meetings and she knew I had been the newsletter editor of our co-op. (She didn't know

Karen Ensminger is the Editorial Advisor of Offspring. *She has been and continues to be a tremendous asset to the MCCN family. She directs The Scrap Box in Ann Arbor, MI.*

that I had also been a textbook editor for 12 years before Alex was born.)

I didn't even remember reading *Offspring Magazine* while a co-op parent so I tracked down a copy of an old issue. Not a bad little magazine, I thought. It would be fun to get back into publishing, and Shelley assured me the monthly meetings were fun—neat people and good lunches!

I had no idea what a longterm commitment I had started. Now my son is a senior and will be off to college this fall and I'm faced with the prospect of how to "let go." The same is true of my commitment to *Offspring*.

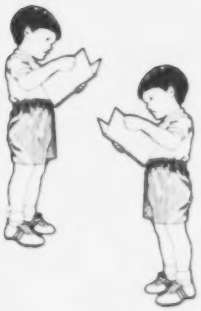
Why did I stay around all those years? *Offspring* for me was like another child—I couldn't let just anybody take over.

I have worked with talented people throughout the years. First when I started, Susan Raccoli and Kaye Rittinger were the editors. Later Sue Mikan and I did the editing. When Sue moved, Amy Ryberg replaced her. Then Amy Hockey came on board, followed by Lisa Mangigian. The coordinator's job was taken over by Sheryl Pulley, Mitzi Warren and now Terri Eisenlord. Each person has brought her own special talents to the task and worked cooperatively to continue the high quality of the magazine.

It has been a very rewarding 13 years for me, because of all the dedicated people on the MCCN board who have become lifelong friends, the enthusiasm of the other editors and coordinators and of the many other good people I've met at White Pine Printers and Unit Packaging, *Offspring*'s distributor.

Although I will stay on as an advisor to *Offspring*, it's good to know the magazine is in very capable hands and will continue to be a positive influence in MCCN's efforts in teacher and parent education.

Reflections on the 25th Anniversary of Offspring



MARILYNN M. ROSENTHAL

The first part of this article is a reprint from the 25th Anniversary Edition in 1985.

Can you imagine what a special pleasure it is to help celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Offspring!* When it saw the light of day around my kitchen table, those of us who created it hardly thought about its possible future. We were excited to have an opportunity to exercise our talents and glad to be making a contribution to the cooperative nursery school movement.

Marilynn Rosenthal, Founding Editor of Offspring, *is the Director of the program in Health Policy Studies at the University of Michigan. She also directs the U of M Forum on Health Policy Reform and Change. Her sixth book will appear this winter and she has accepted an appointment as Visiting Professor at the Nordic School of Public Health in Sweden.*

As I have moved from volunteer to the professional world, I have looked back on my cooperative nursery school experience with special affection. It was the first community group my young family joined, and it provided rich experiences for us in a multitude of ways. Not only did my children have a fine pre-school experience, but I grew tremendously as a parent, seeing my children with other pre-schoolers, exchanging experiences with other parents and growing in confidence as I learned from teachers and fellow members. To this day I am convinced that the cooperative nursery school philosophy stands head and shoulders above other forms of nursery and day care programs in our country.

In addition to all of this, and because it emphasizes parent participation, it provided me and several friends (Gerry Schreier and Lita Zemmol) with a personal opportunity for growth and creativity in a protected environment. The Detroit Council and later the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nurseries were both encouraging and generous as we developed *Offspring*, a tool for enhancing parent education.

It began as a simple newsletter at the Rosedale Cooperative Nursery. Its first transformation was into a simple magazine format with a few articles and rather crude but sincere drawings and layout. When MCCN became its sponsor, it developed into a respectable little journal.

Katy Arnstein's wonderful line drawings enlivened its pages, and her artistic training improved its layout. Many educators, psychologists, psychiatrists, and early childhood experts contributed to its pages. We began to use beautiful photographs of individual children to grace the cover. The magazine became as close to professional as we could make it, and we grew with it. The Offspring experience and the co-op nursery movement gave us a special chance to develop our own personal skills as we made our own small contribution to the movement itself. I'm convinced that this is the great power and special attraction of parent-owned nursery

schools. We all owe a special thanks to Katherine Whiteside Taylor (1897-1989), founder and leader of the cooperative preschool movement.

Katy Arnstein

You may be interested in knowing that *Offspring* caught the eye of some New York publishers about our eighth year. They wanted to buy the magazine and distribute it through diaper services.

It was exciting and gratifying to see our circulation grow, first in the Detroit area, then in Michigan, and eventually around the country and Canada. We had some foreign subscriptions as well. Perhaps the height of satisfaction was reached when the United States Peace Corps purchased subscriptions for some of its overseas volunteers working as nursery school teachers in Africa.

I want to mention the important contributions of our editorial board as well. I think Dr. Joseph Fischhoff, child psychiatrist, was on the board from the very beginning and faithfully attended those meetings year after year as did Esther Callard from Wayne State University. (Dr. Fischhoff, in fact, is still on the editorial board!) They and many others were infinitely supportive and helped us develop our own ideas and strengths.

That all seems a long way into the past now. When I returned to the University of Michigan for my Ph.D. in 1970, I

relinquished the editorship with great regret. It passed into the very capable hands of Shirley Daly and Marylene Schneider, who applied their own fine talents and energy to building the magazine and contributing their ideas to its pages. Ten years later Kaye Rittinger and Susan Raccoli took on the editorship. The fact that there have been relatively few editors in the last twenty-five years indicates the dedication these editors had, as well as the great satisfaction gained from the experience.

And now, ten years down the line, we are celebrating *Offspring*'s 35th anniversary. What a tribute to the editors and staff that have kept the magazine going and to the parents of the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nurseries who have nurtured these efforts. Those of us associated with the MCCN have always understood the importance of early childhood experiences. Now the nation is catching up with us. It is very good to see more national concern expressed for the needs of young children. I think we can thank people like Hillary Rodham Clinton and Marion Wright Edelman for that. To my mind, the cooperative nursery remains a powerful model for both child care and parenting education. We need to think about creative ways to promote it in the 1990s and into the 21st century.

Meanwhile, I continue to cherish my experience with the magazine and the Council. My interest in the early childhood experience has been greatly rekindled with the arrival of my grandchild, Madeleine Jaye who will have her first preschool experience starting in February, 1995. She represents the wonder of *Offspring* we all experience, generation after generation after generation. I cherish the thoughtful and loving parenting provided by her parents, Helen Rosenthal and Carmen Marino who manage to pursue important professional careers and careful child care. And I look forward to the 45th anniversary issue of *Offspring* Magazine.

Dollars and Sense Between Children and Parents

PHYLLIS J. WORDHOUSE

The following article is a synopsis of a presentation given at the Michigan Council of Cooperative Nursery Schools Conference, Spring 1994.

What a powerful financial force children are in our country's economy! A recent survey found that children in the United States receive approximately $14.4 billion per year, from allowances, jobs and gifts. Children also greatly influence their parents' and grandparents' spending to the tune of approximately $132 billion a year.

Phyllis J. Wordhouse, Certified Financial Planner, has been frequently interviewed and quoted by local and national media. She is the president of Wordhouse Financial Planning and Education in Plymouth, MI.

It happens so quickly. Parents and grandparents ask preschool children to select items for the adults to purchase. By age 8, many children are independently making purchases, without adult supervision. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for independence. But what are the children basing their spending decisions on? Who's influencing them?

One of the greatest influences on children is the perpetual advertising they encounter. The advertising media is definitely doing its best to get the lion's share of these dollars. Their goal is to hit the kids where they live: sports, music, and being cool. But is this how we want our children to make financial decisions?

There is a solution! Yes, you, the parents. If you've taught your child your values, including truthfulness, integrity and honesty, the media will have a hard time controlling financial decisions.

As a financial educator, advisor, parent of four, and grandmother, my mission is to share with other parents some basics about personal financial control and on how to teach money skills to your offspring.

I'm the first to admit that we won't agree on every point. That's OK! Understand the basics and apply them to your situation. Whatever action you decide to take, make sure it's beneficial to your child's financial education.

There are several basic steps to teach money. The first step is to ask what are your family's financial goals? Corporations and organizations have a mission statement and you need one too. Once your family agrees on its focus, write it down and display it prominently (refrigerator door is perfect). Having a mission statement gives the family a focus and gives everyone priorities. This focus will make it easier for all family

members to make future financial decisions. A mission statement may not mean much to preschoolers; however, it can be

reassuring for parents to have a concrete plan to help when children say, "I want...."

Once your family's financial goals are established, advance to the second step: decide what needs to be changed. How are you going to accomplish this change, while facing and overcoming constant obstacles? If your mission is "to raise independent children who can think for themselves and survive in this world," are your current actions supporting that goal? If not, what's the problem?

Children need appropriate role models to follow to learn basic money skills. If you always tell your children they can't have a toy or attend a function because, "you have no money," but your actions contradict your speech, you have a problem. Frequently eating out and constantly spending money on non-essential items for yourself demonstrates to your child that

you have two different standards. Your child will learn to mistrust you and most likely will have difficulty respecting you and taking you seriously. Learn the difference between financial need and desire.

In order to get better results in every area of your life, you must move on to the third step: make better decisions! This is especially true in finances! It's very important to display trust and respect for your children while maintaining a positive attitude about your own financial control.

This doesn't mean that you have to be happy and contented with your current situation. Help is available if you're willing to seek it out. Just like any other activity, you can't be expected to know how to control your finances until you're taught money skills. Once you have control of your financial situation, your self esteem increases and financial stress is reduced. Most parents didn't have classes in personal finances during their school years; however, let's not encourage our children to follow in our financially illiterate footsteps.

The next step you must tackle in educating your children about money is to examine and understand your own attitude toward money. Do you look at money as evil, a replacement for love, a social standing, or maybe as a taboo subject? If your past wasn't ideal, face it! You can't change your past, but you don't want to continue those old behaviors and thereby plant them in the minds of your children.

Involve the children in the various financial arenas of your life. Teach them to write down their own goals, chart their own expenses, and work out their obstacles so they'll also accomplish their individual dreams. For those too young to write, have them draw pictures of their goals. Encourage dreaming along with dealing with reality. Unless it's life threatening, don't bail them out of the consequences of their actions. Let them experience the results of their decisions, good or bad.

Talk to your children about the power of advertising—that the people in the advertisements are actors, paid to say what they say. Have your children try the item advertised at a friend's house, to see if it's really advertised accurately. Many times children will cool off on a toy, once they try it.

Here are a few financial suggestions to help you involve your children in financial situations:

- Before going to the grocery store, have children help prepare a list of needed items. Child draws pictures of well known items for his or her shopping list (an older sibling or parent might write name of item next to the picture, as many drawings are not recognizable to others).

- The child looks for coupons of items family typically uses. At the store child holds the coupon of desired item and matches the coupon with the item. Matched coupons go into the child's pocket/envelope, to be given eventually to the cashier. Let the child have the responsibility of handing the coupons to the cashier.
- The child picks out one cereal from two cereal coupons you've approved. Don't try to influence the decision. If you approved of either cereal, her choice sticks. If you have more children, allow them to each make their own choice. A child needs to make a decision and have others positively acknowledge the decision. You're encouraging decision making and building self esteem, essential ingredients for financial control.
- Let the child pay the cashier. In your daily conversation, talk about how your family gets its money to pay for the groceries and other needs. Children in today's world may no longer think money "grows on trees," but they can easily get the idea money comes from those machines outside the bank!
- If you're going to allow children to purchase candy or a toy, give them the money before you enter the store. Let them hold the money and make their own decision. This typically eliminates whining and begging.
- While at the gas station, filling up the gas tank, tell the child to watch for $5.00 in the little window and tell you when to stop filling the tank. Don't be upset if the bill is $5.10. After the first few times, it will become a game.

Help your child become familiar and comfortable handling money. Make up your own games with money: Give

money names, such as Nick the nickel; balance a different coin on each finger while walking from the kitchen to the bedroom; play store; make a flower out of a $1 bill for Mother's Day; find all the numbers on a dollar bill.

Teaching children about the value of money goes beyond nickels, dimes, and dollars. A study done by the University of Michigan revealed that children don't necessarily want to be rich and have more material goods. What they actually want is more time with their family members. The important question is not how much money you spend on your children, but rather how much time you spend with them.

Making Choices Work Between Career and Family

JODY A. SCHNETZLER

The following introduction is by Carole Grates.

Three decades ago I remember wrestling with the dilemma of returning to work after my son's birth. It was a time when mothers were expected to stay home which made the decision more difficult. Today the expectations have changed, but the dilemma remains. In fact, mothers who choose to stay home with their babies often have to explain their motives much as mothers in my day had to justify returning to work. All too often the result is the internal struggle Jody went through when she and her husband adopted their son a year ago.

Jody had built a stimulating career as an art teacher. Should she set aside these years and stay at home, risking

Jody A. Schnetzler is a high school art teacher in West Branch. Her son, Charles, is doing well in a home day care. She is currently working on a master's degree in education.

her job future? She also knew how critical these first years are for her child. Should she set these aside risking his future? Or could she work through the dilemma with the support of her husband and a quality child care support system? This article represents Jody's struggle. She researched the issues and came to the decision that was best for her family at the time.

What about the future? Another child will bring up all the issues again with a different perspective. The choice may not be the same; the process of making the choice, though, will have to repeated. As she so aptly puts it, "The decision to work or stay home while raising a family will be as individual as fingerprints." Here are the issues she presents. The final choice, though, can only be yours.

Many women, because of a variety of pressures societal, career, financial—do not have the option of staying at home to raise their children. According to Amara Bachu, a statistician and demographer with the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1976 only 31 percent of working women returned to their job before their child's first birthday. By 1990 that figure had risen to 53.1 percent; among women with four or more years of college, it was as high as 68 percent. Every year the figure increases. (Levine, 1994) Many women have no choice: they must work outside the home for economic reasons. However, some women do have the option to stay home to raise their children. How should she decide? The decision to work or stay home while raising a family will be as individual as fingerprints. Each situation presents its own solutions. And even with one woman, having each additional child presents new decisions to make.

Because the research about the effects on children with working moms is so difficult to evaluate and with no clear-cut evidence on the long-term risks or benefits, a decision to

work or stay home will probably be based on individual family priorities. After setting priorities in order, (for example: baby; family; career; financial security; the luxuries of life; and vacations), a mother carefully can consider which option lines up with her individual priorities and best supports her values.

Some mothers decide that staying in the work force not only provides self esteem, but benefits the entire family. "Competence spreads. If you are happy in your work, your satisfaction will spill over into your private life. Nothing enhances your ability to love like a healthy sense of self esteem." (Mohler, 80) Many working mothers, however, acknowledge that they do not have enough time in their lives to accommodate both career and family as well as they would like to, but most say they are happier working outside the home than not. Career moms say they are willing to make the sacrifices and compromises—not so they can "have it all," but so they can lead "whole, fulfilling lives."

One mother, Carol Williams-Hood, tried it both ways and says she is much happier and more fulfilled now that she is working again. After her daughter Carol, who is now 6, was born, Ms Williams-Hood grew increasingly bored and frustrated with nothing to do. "I wasn't fulfilled when I wasn't working...I'm not the housekeeper type. I'm a writer, a creative person. I must create to find fulfillment. When my daughter grows up, I still must have a life." (Norment, 40)

Sirgay Sanger, M.D., founder and director of the Early Care Center, and consultant to

the Parent/Child Interaction Program at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital, both in New York City, says after spending years observing children and their mothers, with careers and without: "Mothers who stay home often do not spend any more time with their children than mothers who work...The relationship between working mothers and their children is often better than between stay-at-home moms and their kids. Working is not abnormal." (Mohler, 80)

For many mothers working part-time is the right choice. "Mothers who work part-time in the year following their baby's birth appear to fare the best. Compared with full-time homemakers and full-time workers, part-timers report less depression and anxiety, perceive their marriages as more equitable, display less anxiety during short separations from their infant and have a more well rounded relationship with the youngster." (Bower, 220) The possibilities of part-time work are endless and depend on your skills and work experience. A former employer may hire you on a flexible, reduced, or job-sharing schedule. Perhaps you can do your work at home, or take your baby on assignments. If you're a teacher, you can tutor, substitute teach or start classes in your area of expertise. Part-time businesses can be run from the home as well. If you're an accountant or an advertising copywriter, find clients that you can handle from your den. Looking for a creative compromise may give you the best of both worlds. (Eisenberg, 589)

Mothers who decide to work full or part-time have these issues to consider: quality child-care, spouse support, and support on the job. Helen Farmer, Ph. D., professor of counseling psychology and a specialist in career development for women at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, states that high-quality child care is crucial to new parents. "If a woman is able to work out the issue of child care, a major burden is lifted." (Levine, 196)

The issue of spouse support—whether it is financial, psychological or both—is critical when a woman is considering forsaking career for home. A New Jersey banker and mother of two claims, "If I stopped working, my husband would think less of me. We're in the same field, and that plays a big part in our relationship. We always talk about work. He says he'd find me much less interesting if I quit." (Jaworski, 38)

Next is the issue of support in the workplace. It may be up to you to keep your job if that is what you want. A secretary with a small manufacturing company points out, "I could see when I announced my pregnancy that my boss was happy for me, but as my pregnancy advanced, I began to pick up on nervous vibes from him." (Levine, 197) Think creatively about how you can keep your job while on a leave of absence. If your idea is reasonable, then maybe your boss will be flexible enough to try it. If it works out, it may set a precedent from which others can benefit.

Certainly mothers who decide to put their babies and family life as top priority usually choose to stay home as full-time moms. The option to stay home is contemplated by many mothers who have the choice. What benefits come with staying at home and raising your family? First of all, you have the chance to get to know your children. One mother states that she was so wrapped up in her career that she hadn't given it much thought to how well her children were coping, interacting with peers and care-givers, and most important, how they were feeling about themselves. (Garey, 90)

A second benefit provides you and your children with a warm and caring home environment. Another mother, previously a part-time registered nurse, put this in her own words: "What do I do? Brain surgery, that's what; non- invasive brain surgery. Instillation of important images. Creator of life long values. And along with that: woman behind basic life-giving smells: bread and stew, apple pie. Smells you finally internalize and turn into a memory you'll keep

forever..the memory of a home, and warmth, and caring. I meet primal needs, that's what I do; how can anything compare?" (Berg, 123).

Mothers who choose to stay home full-time also have issues to consider. One is the fear of being totally dependent upon someone else. For example, one mother said she was scared to death at this thought. "It was because I knew that now, for the first time, I was totally dependent on my husbands's salary." She also stated losing a sense of power. "It was that I felt I was losing a lot of power, even individuality. There were also all those other darker fears: my brain would turn to mush, I'd feel guilty now about having a less than spotless house." (Berg, 122) Most mothers, however, who choose to stay home will tell you that the benefits of raising their own children far outweigh these issues. Many full-time moms are active volunteers in their communities gaining leadership skills.

Whatever choice you make, it's likely to require some measure of sacrifice. As committed as you might be to returning to your job, you may experience regret when you pass other mothers and their babies on their way to the park while you're on your way to the office. Or as committed as you might be to staying home, you may feel a sense of regret when you talk to friends who are still pursuing their careers. Because we make different choices, these feelings are normal, and since few perfect situations exist in our imperfect world, they're something you'll have to learn to live with. However, if they begin to multiply and you find dissatisfaction outweighing satisfaction, it's time to reassess the choice you've made. A decision that seemed right in theory when you made it may seem all wrong in practice later—in which case you shouldn't hesitate to reverse or alter it, if at all possible. Later pregnancies give cause for evaluation. With two or more children in child care, it may be more cost efficient and less stressful to stay home. Mothers who have stayed

home may choose to reenter the work force after their children go to school.

And when everything isn't as idyllic as you'd like..."remember that children who get plenty of love are very resilient. Even the wrong decision, if there is such a thing, isn't likely to leave permanent scars." (Eisenberg, 589)

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Discussion Questions:

CAROLE GRATES

This article could be used as a catalyst for a round table discussion in your cooperative preschool. Here are some questions to get you started.

1. List all the priorities you and your spouse have considered. These may include finishing a degree, buying or building a home, getting a new car or boat, taking a vacation, developing a family culture and tradition, building a savings, and many others. Then do the following:
   A. List those you think can be put aside for a few years.
   B. Now rank those that are left.
   C. What do you already have in place to reach those identified in B?
   D. What do you need to implement to achieve your goals?
   E. Will two working parents with child care costs be a necessary part of your plan or are there other ways to achieve your goals, i.e. through cutting expenses or delaying purchases?

2. Now look at work outside the home and your own attitudes:
   A. Is it stimulating for you or does it take all your energy and cause you undue stress? Is it something you could easily give up or one that is necessary to your personal growth and satisfaction?
   B. If you decide not to work, do you have interests, hobbies, or volunteer work that can fulfill your personal needs?

C. Have you and your spouse discussed concerns and attitudes you both have toward the decision to work or not to work outside the home?

3. If you are thinking of working, have you explored the availability and affordability of quality child care? How will this affect your take home pay? If you break even and working is an essential part of your self esteem, then it may be worth it. If quality care is not available and you will be constantly on a guilt trip, even making a good wage may not be worth the stress.

4. Finally, do what is best for you. Try not to be influenced by anyone other than your spouse. This is a very personal decision. What will be best for you and your family at this time in your life? And remember, no decision is final. There is always another fork in the road.

THE COOPERATIVE GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

TAHIA MILLER

The play world is the child's natural medium for personal growth and positive learning. Young people are the masters of this magic realm—they play the most and are the most influenced by play. Their play is both serious business and pure fun. At its heart, it signifies nothing less than how they will be in this world.

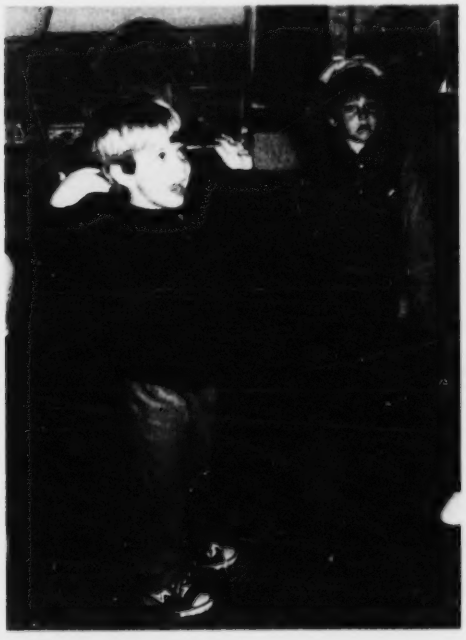
Play is an ideal medium for positive social learning because it is natural, active, and highly motivating for most children. Games are a great way to bring people together; they involve everyone in the process of acting, reacting, feeling and experiencing. However, if you distort children's play by rewarding excessive competition, physical aggression against others, cheating, and unfair play, you distort children's lives.

Tahia Miller is currently president of Parent Cooperative Preschools International (PCPI) and past president of Indianapolis Council of Preschool Cooperatives and presently on ICPC's advisory board. She is in her 13th year of teaching preschool to 2 and 4 year olds at Willow Creek Co-op in Indianapolis. Her own co-op children are 23 and 18 years old. This article is reprinted with permission from Co-operatively Speaking. *November 1994.*

Children learn through their play; in traditional games they learn that they must win to be a worthy person; through cooperative play the child learns to share in the fun of an activity with others—that the experience itself is rewarding. The feelings generated in many little people can best be summed up in the words of one who said "In cooperative games I feel left in."

Competitive play leads to competition in other aspects of living; cooperative play leads to a wider cooperation with others. In a competitive game, a player reaches the objective (winning) only if the other players fail; everyone but the winner ends up as a loser, and the winner can't help but enjoy everyone else's loss. Traditional competition is a necessary part of life, but it must include the element of failure. Cooperative play provides a needed counterbalance to the unavoidable competition.

"In Cooperative games, I feel left in."



Cooperative games are activities that the participants play together, rather than against one another, just for the fun of it. Through this play, children learn teamwork, trust, and group unity.

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They also practice their counting and communication skills, exercise their problem solving skills, learn to recognize the rights of others, learn risk-taking and how to play and learn from each other. Change is also an important part of cooperative games. Change the boundaries, rules, equipment, the number of players, sides—anything that promotes more fun.

People of every size, shape, age, and ability—from infants to the aged—can enjoy these games, and they can be played virtually anywhere with almost no equipment. When the right games for a specific group are chosen, they almost always result in total involvement, feelings of acceptance, cooperative contribution by all players, and lots of smiling faces.

Following are some game ideas from Ms. Miller's workshop on cooperative games given at the Spring PCPI meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, 1994.

GAMES FOR FUN!

Hugs

All ages: The players run, skip, walk, etc. around the area. When the leader shouts "Hug!" each player finds someone to hug. Then the leader says "Go!" and the players are off again. The next time have 3 players hug, then 4, and so on. This can also be done to music.

Frozen Bean Bag

Ages 3 to 7: The children begin by moving around the area balancing a bean bag on their head. The leader changes the pace with music or direction. If a player's bean bag falls the child is frozen until another player picks up the bean bag without losing her own bean bag to free the frozen player. The idea is to help your friends. For younger children try putting

the bag on the shoulder. At the end ask: "how many helped a friend?"

Musical Hoops
Ages 3 to 7: Have each child stand in a hula hoop, then start the music and children start to move. Then remove one hoop. When the music stops the children must all find a hoop to stand in. Continue removing a hoop each time and see if everyone can fit in one hoop. Musical chairs can be played in the same way by removing a chair each time (instead of a child). See how many children can fit on one or two chairs.

Mile of Yarn
Ages 3 to 7: One child starts with a ball of thick yarn, wraps the end of the yarn around his waist and so on until the whole group is intertwined in yarn. Then reverse the process.

Barnyard
Ages 3 to 7: Each player is given the name of a barnyard animal from a list of four or five possibilities. Then the players scatter around the area. The players close their eyes or the room is darkened. The object of the game is to find the other animals in your group by using the sound the animal makes. Play continues until all animals have found their group.

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- ❑ **To express a variety of ideas;**
- ❑ **To promote the co-op philosophy;**
- ❑ **To enhance our relationships with children and each other.**

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FAMILY MEETINGS:

A TIME TO RECONNECT

BILL WINKLER

Over the last 60 years, every aspect of family life has changed: where we live; our occupations; the number of children we have; stability of our marriages; and our proximity to extended family. Culture had changed so dramatically that it has literally been impossible to comprehend many of these changes. It has been difficult to understand what we have lost due to those changes and how these losses have and will affect us. In their book, *Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self-Indulgent World*, co-authors H. Stephen Glenn and Jane

Bill Winkler is the co-director of Verbal Connections, Inc. in Southfield, MI and has been an educational consultant for 17 years. He is a favorite conference speaker for GDCNC and MCCN. He is also a board member of Foundations for Excellence in the Walled Lake public school district.

Nelson make a very strong case for the importance of a child's sense of belonging, feeling connected and making a contribution in relation to the child's healthy self-esteem.

Looking back

In 1930, 70 percent of the population of this country lived in rural farming communities. This population was mainly made up of extended families that created a network of opportunities for new arrivals to learn how the family worked. Values, principles, family ethics: all these fundamentally important descriptors of what the family was all about were passed on from generation to generation by the uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins and parents.

Once a week the family would gather for dinner at someone's house and the issues of the day or the family issues were discussed through dialogue. Young members listened and were invited to speak their mind and found many opportunities to feel connected to the family. In this environment, they were also given an opportunity to contribute because at a very early age they were provided tasks to accomplish that were important to the function of the family. These tasks also provided young children with the understanding that they were becoming capable.

In 1950, twenty short years later, 70 percent of the population had moved to large urban and suburban areas. The extended family was being dismantled, dialoguing was under attack from television, and the pace of life was increasingly more rapid. Providing a better life for themselves and their children was the premise behind most of the moves to the

city. Opportunities for children to feel the glow of connectedness, contribution and capability were becoming more infrequent.

The current dilemma

Forty five years later, 50 percent of marriages are not lasting. The pace of our lives has increased dramatically. Single parenting, double incomes, the demise of our industrial based economy and the move to an information-technology based society has increased the pressure of living. This has, in turn, contributed to an ever increasing sense of anomie, a creeping sense of isolation from one another.

As is the case in many families, when I was growing up I very rarely felt a sense of connectedness or a feeling that I was contributing anything to the family. Much was given to me and done for me out of love and nurturing from warm and kind parents. However, I needed to be validated by my family for contributing. I also needed opportunities to validate myself by acting capable through accomplishments. I found it difficult to be validated when so much was done for me.

Over the years of teaching, I have come to the realization that much of what we as a society have lost over the last 60 years can be overcome by one simple change in how we do business as a family. Whether we are a single parent family or dual parent family, the change can have an immensely positive impact. Starting today and once a week, every week from now on, commit yourselves to having a family meeting. This will encourage children to contribute, and to connect to family tasks and issues.

Starting today and once a week, every week from now on, commit yourselves to having a family meeting.

Family meetings are not dinner-time chats. They are separate, important time slots every week where everyone commits

to exclude everything else in their lives and sit with the family to discuss family issues. No telephone calls, no television, and no answering the doorbell. Put a sign on the door that says "Family meeting in progress...Do Not Disturb."

Family meetings can start when children are old enough to communicate. The length of time should be limited to a few minutes when children are small and should lengthen and expand as they mature and are capable of handling more responsibility. Also, the number of issues needs to be limited when children are small; one or two are sufficient. Children need to be encouraged to express their views, preferably before the adults. Adults should avoid dominating conversation or decision making so as to foster continued involvement on the part of the children.

Beginning your family meetings:

1. Babies can get used to meeting by simply being present during family discussions.

2. Toddlers and preschoolers can handle decisions that are brief and take place often.

3. A more formal structure to the meetings can be introduced to older children and preschoolers.

4. Start on a positive note. Share what is new and exciting in each person's life. Or, tell what you appreciate about each other. Validation and self-validation are extremely important in a child's development.

5. Discuss "old business." The family can agree that the bedtime baths seem to be going well or decide to change bath time for one or all of the children.

6. Discuss "new business." This may include upcoming vacations, birthdays or family obligations.

7. Agreements reached are binding until the next meeting.

8. Regularly scheduled meetings are important so that children can learn to keep appointments and be part of the cooperation process.

9. Limit griping. Focus on solving problems. Make a rule that states, "Complaints will be heard only when the complainer is willing to work to find a solution."

10. Chores need to be distributed evenly while considering the capabilities of each family member. Deadlines for accomplishment and consequences for noncompliance need to be established.

11. Make meetings a reliable forum. Complaints about decisions made at a meeting should be deferred to the next meeting.

12. Address all issues. All feelings and thoughts are valid. Each person perceives her own issue as most important.

Generally speaking, family meetings provide an opportunity for you as a parent to practice your listening and encouraging skills. It helps you to understand that controlling behavior through the use of power is ineffective as a long-term educational tool.

Becoming a guide and mentor to your children is what parenting is all about. Parenting is a difficult task for which most of us are unprepared. Family meetings are an effective tool that will help each family member along the way.

ALLERGIC PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN Rx

JAMES L. McDONALD, M.D.

The following article is the first in an ongoing series focusing on children's health.

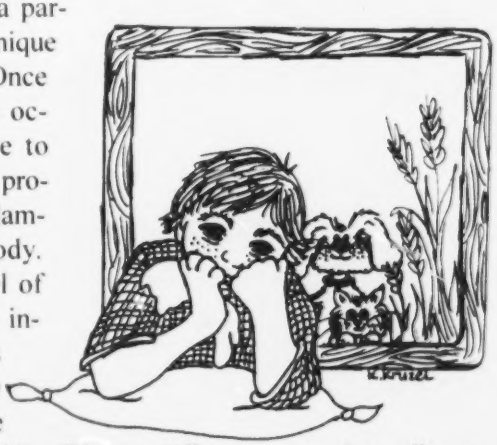
In the fairy tale, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* he was easy to recognize. His red swollen nose and constant sneezing helped us to remember his name. We called him Sneezy. Today, a more accurate term would be allergy sensitive. That doesn't quite have the same ring to it, though.

The ability to develop allergic sensitivities is inherited by 20 percent of us (a ratio even higher than in our fairy tale!)

James L. McDonald M.D., a Board Certified Physician in Allergy and Pediatrics, is a Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Michigan, Western Michigan University and Michigan State University. He has a private practice in Kalamazoo.

That is why allergic children have allergic relatives. A child with this ability is said to be "atopic." A sensitivity develops when the allergic child suddenly produces a large amount of a sensitizing antibody, known as IgE, directed against a harmless protein in the environment. Allergenic proteins are produced by living things. They are found in pollens, mold spores or foods, and are produced by house mites and house pets. Each allergic child, as he goes through life, selects a few thousand of these proteins. Each sensitivity is separate, occurs suddenly and, in theory, persists for life. In addition, an allergic person can develop new sensitivities at any time.

Symptoms



Allergies in a particular child are unique for that child. Once sensitization has occurred, exposure to that allergen will produce allergic inflammation in the body. At a certain level of exposure enough inflammation is produced to cause symptoms (the symptom threshold). We use different terms depending on where the symptoms occur.

Symptoms in the upper airway we call allergic rhinitis or it's called hay fever if seasonal. Upper airway symptoms may include a runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, and itchy watery eyes. If the lungs, or lower airway, are involved we call it asthma. Symptoms of the lower airway include coughing, wheezing, tightness in the chest and difficulty in breathing.

An allergic reaction in the skin is called hives or eczema. Hives are distinct blotches of skin that tend to move around the body. It causes the skin to become swollen, red and itchy. Eczema, however, tends to stay put, usually occurring behind knees or elbows or on the child's face or neck.

Allergic reactions in the digestive tract, usually from foods, are a gastrointestinal allergy, involving the stomach and intestines. Although we have given reactions a different name depending on their location, the actual allergic reaction is the same regardless of where it occurs in the body. Histamine is released into the tissues and causes the symptoms.

Since the symptoms of allergy are very similar to infection, the onset of the allergic problem is seldom immediately recognized. Infection is often assumed due to the symptoms. Allergy is then only considered after the symptoms persist for longer than infections could explain, sometimes for years. In retrospect, it's obvious that an allergy was the cause all along.

The fact that sensitization requires previous exposure explains the common patterns we see in young children. Pollen allergy as a cause of symptoms is never seen under age three. Each pollen is produced only a few weeks of the year. Children whose symptoms appear by age one to two are usually sensitive to a house pet, mites, or a food eaten daily. The exposure to pet protein is about ten times as great as mite exposure. Mold allergy is not often seen in preschoolers.

Symptom threshold

It follows from the previous facts that an allergic child never becomes "un-allergic" since one's genetic makeup doesn't change. A blue-eyed person doesn't become brown-eyed. It also follows that sensitivities, being due to antibodies, don't suddenly disappear. Why, then, the persistent myth that allergies somehow are outgrown? We've all heard about a college student leaving his pets at home, moving to a dor-

mitory who outgrows his asthma. Wrongly, we assume that if his symptoms are gone, he has outgrown his asthma. Could it be that the student was no longer exposed to Rover, the lovable family dog? Years later, however, when the student's own child brings home an irresistible stray puppy, the asthma then reappears. Apparently, the college student did not outgrow his allergic reaction to dogs. The college environment never caused him to reach his symptom threshold.

There is another important feature of the allergy threshold. Most allergic children have multiple sensitivities. Each exposure produces its own reaction but they add up. Several exposures at once may be required to produce symptoms, so that avoiding any one allergen may control symptoms. This is why patients with summer symptoms may substantially improve by avoiding perennial allergens (pets, mites) at that time, even if they don't have winter symptoms from those allergens alone.

Managing allergies

Allergies thus cannot be cured, but can be managed. Two quite different approaches are available. Increasingly potent medication can, to a degree, suppress the symptoms caused by the allergic reactions. Different r dications are used to treat asthma, nasal, or skin reactions. Drug treatment does not require one to know the cause. The alternative would be to discover which allergens are responsible and get at the source of the reaction. Of the options available, avoidance is obvious. An allergen completely avoided cannot cause a reaction or symptoms. Allergy shots (immunotherapy) are another alternative which consists of regular injections of the causative allergens. They have the effect of gradually decreasing the sensitivity. Several years are required for maximum effect.

Pollens are not avoidable; fortunately shots work very well. Shots are often useful for molds which are mostly un-

avoidable. Using simple techniques, mites are 80 percent avoidable. If symptoms remain, mite shots are effective but only if avoidance is continued. Shots work very poorly for animal allergens, so by trial and observation, each patient must determine to what degree avoidance is necessary to reduce symptoms to an acceptable level. For foods, avoidance (partial or complete) is the only alternative.

Doctor's tips for the classroom

Food Allergies

It is possible for a child to be allergic to any food as long as it is a protein. Parents should inform the teacher about any possible food allergies before the class year begins so the teacher can make appropriate snack recommendations to parents bringing the snacks from home. It is important for the snack to be safe for all the children since children like to trade food. If the parents wish, however, to prepare their child's own snack each time, the teacher must be sure that the child does not eat anything except what he brought.

Allergies to Animals

The key words here are: beware of fur or feathers! Reptiles and fish are safe for children; crabs and iguanas are increasing in popularity. Of course, the teacher should notify parents before introducing any new animal to the classroom. Often parents are not aware of animal al-

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lergies if the child has not had contact with the animal before. It is important for the teacher to look for any symptoms such as sneezing, wheezing or skin reactions and communicate her observations with the parents so they can consult with their child's physician.

So long, Sneezy!

Each allergic child requires an individual approach. Some may respond completely to simple avoidance, others may require a combination of measures including immunotherapy. Accurate diagnoses usually requires skin testing and possible diet trials which are best interpreted by a trained, board certified, allergist.

Fortunately, children need not suffer like Sneezy and rely only on handkerchiefs for relief. Any allergen can be managed by avoidance, immunotherapy or a combination of treatments.

Have More FUN with Music!

CHUCK HAGE
ELISA HUSS-HAGE

We sing. We wiggle. We quack. We act totally silly. We make mistakes. Oops! We have gobs of fun with the kids at our concerts. It's okay for us to act that way because we're children's entertainers. Many of the parents or teachers in our audience stand rigidly in the back and cross their arms as if providing crowd control. They look away when we invite them to participate. They think it's okay because the entertainment is for the kids, not for the grown-ups. We disagree!

Chuck Hage, a special education teacher in Toledo, Ohio, is currently Vice-President of Affiliates for the Ohio Association for the Education of Young Children. Elisa Huss-Hage, also a special education teacher, is currently staying home to raise their two co-op daughters, Emily and Julia. Together, Elisa and Chuck perform interactive musical concerts for young children such as Just Kiddin' Around*...They are currently writing a book for teachers and parents from which this information is taken.*

We believe that children should see their parents and teachers being a little goofy, having fun and expressing themselves in ways which are out of the ordinary for them.

To children, most grown-ups fit the same general description: taller than all of the kids on their block, mature, appropriate, and serious. They don't sing out loud. They don't have time to play much. They don't make mistakes because they're perfect. They don't quack. Unfortunately, some of these grown-ups are adult role models for young children. Too many parents and teachers aren't having enough FUN with the kids. Children's early educational experiences should be positive, creative, joyous, exciting, challenging and fun.

When we address a group of early childhood educators, we challenge them to have a little more fun with children. Specifically, we encourage them to use more music, movement, rhymes, chants and fingerplays to liven up the day and make activities more enjoyable for everyone. The value of music and rhythm activities is extensive. Children develop language and communication skills, motor skills, self-esteem, math concepts, a sense of order, discipline, social skills, spatial relationships, emotional exploration, use of the imagination and more.

A wonderful bond is created between adult and child through singing, dancing and playing together. Our daughter, Emily, brought new songs home from her co-op weekly. She sang them and taught us the motions to do along with her. Her teacher used music throughout the day to facilitate activities and was likely to burst into song at anytime. The children were always ready to sing. It was a joyous daily celebration! It makes good sense that if children's first school experiences are fun, then they will naturally have a positive long lasting impression about learning and discovery.

We would like to share some ideas with you for using music, movement, rhymes, chants and fingerplays. Here are

some suggestions from our workshop *Let's Say It In Song!*, presented at the 1995 MCCN Conference.

Move with the music

First of all, don't ever say "I can't sing or move." Adults who say "I can't sing or dance," teach children to make excuses to **not try.** The children will follow your example. To get more comfortable, practice on your own at home or in the car. Listen to tapes of the music you plan to use. Don't worry about the kids' reaction to your pitiful singing voice—they can't sing either; just enjoy yourself and do your best. Tell the kids that you're learning and they'll rally around you in support of your good efforts. Go to the library and borrow some books on fingerplays and musical activities. Using music, rhythm and movement is one terrific way to boost a child's and an adult's self-esteem. Here are a some helpful tips, so you can begin right away.

Although our suggestions are geared for use in the classroom, with a little adaptation they can be used at home, during play groups or neighborhood get-togethers or simply during some special one-on-one time with your child. Use music at home whenever possible; be sure to vary selections between classical, jazz, and cultural music.

Begin with movement activities. Think of all the ways children move and use them in activities. Using action words with the kids, brainstorm all the ways someone can move. Take turns demonstrating who or what creeps, twirls or wiggles. Imitate the person, thing, or animal that moves in that particular way.

Now use movement with music. Move with the music and freeze when it stops. Try games where everyone hops like a bunny when the music starts. Next gallop like a horse and so on. Vary the speed to make it more interesting.

To encourage cooperation, play imitation games. Begin by pairing the children up: one child is a mirror of the other. Take turns and switch partners often. Play follow the leader and add marching music. Now it's a parade. Next add child-made shakers and colorful streamers. You've all created a wonderful parade!

Next add rhythm to the music and movement. The imitation and echo games can be endless fun, such as kids clapping to a beat or repeating your beat. You can mix things up by using short and long rhythms. Try clapping hands on various body parts (knees, feet, stomachs, shoulders). Pair children up again: one echoes the other's series of claps or stomps. It is also easy to vary the speed, loudness or frequency of the rhythm.

Join the children in moving rhythmically by swaying, swinging arms, bouncing, shaking and tapping. Recorded music with a strong beat naturally lends itself to rhythmic movement. Rattles, old keys on a string, a tambourine, drums, and rhythm sticks can always be added for a change of pace. Lastly, use rhythm by doing an echo using vocal sounds such as letter sounds, nonsense talking, laughing, or even crying.

Words come along now—chants, nursery rhymes and songs. Engage children when singing a familiar song with a particular emotion or feeling (sadly crying, happily giggling, sleepily yawning). Another favorite is to personalize songs,

using children's names. Individualize the songs, rhymes and chants to each situation and with sensitivity to each child's ability level. It is best to start simply and slowly add components which are more difficult. This allows you to get a feel for the children's abilities. Teach a song a little at a time with oversimplified actions at first so that children won't become overwhelmed. Kids have always loved to sing their favorites, even long after you're tired of them. Go ahead and sing along. It's a great opportunity for kids to show how competent they are. They are able to find great security in familiarity.

A few words about writing your own songs—DO IT NOW! Many tapes by popular artists are available. You can use them to learn songs and get ideas for writing your own. However, you can write songs with references to children easily by starting with a familiar tune. Write words about a particular activity such as clean up, snack, or outside time. Use the kids' names and they'll feel very important. Some familiar tunes are Twinkle, twinkle; Are you sleeping?; Row, row, row; Happy Birthday; I'm a little teapot; Pop goes the weasel; Jingle bells; or Wheels on the bus. You just may surprise yourself and find a hidden talent.

Ideas for music in the classroom

You can use music all day long. There are many opportunities to use a song, fingerplay, rhyme or chant to support or enliven an activity. Possible times might be transitions, cleanup, circle time, snack, toothbrushing, hand washing, just before, during or after a story.

- Use songs, fingerplays, rhymes and chants to stretch stories. Change a known song to fit a story: stop the story at the appropriate time and toss a song in. Teach the song or fingerplay during the week before the storytelling ses-

sion. Children will then have a good chance to recognize it and join in.

- Let the children know that there isn't a right or wrong way to do the actions for a song or fingerplay. Tell them that some people do it this way and others that way. This helps them to tolerate variety and change and allows children of different developmental levels to participate with confidence that they won't do it the wrong way.
- Encourage participation from the children, but allow the "shy" one to sit out. Each child will participate at his or her own level of comfort. Try sitting near a shy child or bring him to your lap while you participate. After all, you can't sit out—you're the teacher! Don't worry about the "shy" one; usually he learns the songs too and sings them at home!
- Choose recorded music from a variety of styles such as marches, baroque, New Orleans jazz, waltz, or ethnic, and play it as background music for several days. Then introduce the same piece and move around with streamers for large muscle movement or with flashlights in a dark room. Next try using imaginary paint brushes and a six foot square canvas for each child, or try large paper and markers or paint.
- When the kids make shakers or streamers, encourage them to make two, so that they can take one home and keep one at school.
- Always send the words and actions to new songs home with the kids. Parents will then know the songs and fingerplays so they can help the child learn at home.
- Let the children lead. You don't always have to be the star! Use their suggestions and then you will let them know that what they say is valuable and important. If you notice a child singing a new song or using new movement, ask her to teach it to you. She will feel very important.

- Make a mistake once in a while and let the kids catch you. Tell them about other times you've bungled something. Let the children see you as a human with some weakness. Explain that failing helps them learn to succeed: failing can hurt, but it is not shameful. Seeing that you have feelings too helps them deal with their own.

Although music is a great way to have fun, don't forget the other benefits like language development, emotional exploration and the opportunity for imaginative play. Let your children know you are having fun being with them and learning more about them and what they know.

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...to the Extreme

LILIAN KATZ

This article is an ERIC Digest reprint which was excerpted from the paper Distinctions between Self-Esteem and Narcissism: Implications for Practice *(available from ERIC/EECE; approximately 80 pages; $10.00).*

Helping children to "feel good about themselves" is frequently listed as an important goal of early education. For example, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (1990) listed the development of "a positive self-image" first among the characteristics of a good quality early

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childhood program. One newsletter for teachers quotes a statement that "The basis for everything we do is self-esteem. Therefore, if we can do something to give children a stronger sense of themselves, starting in preschool, they'll be [a lot wiser] in the choices they make" (McDaniel, 1986).

Narcissism versus Self-Esteem

While the development of high self-esteem seems a worthwhile goal, many practices designed to reach it may instead be encouraging narcissism. This confusion is illustrated by a practice observed in a first grade classroom. Each child had produced a booklet titled "All About Me," consisting of dittoed pages prepared by the teacher, on which the child had provided information. The first page asked for a list of basic information about the child's home and family. The second page was titled "What I like to eat," the third "What I like to watch on TV," the next "What I want for a present," and so forth. On each page the child's attention was directed toward his or her own inner gratification. The topic of each page in these booklets put the child in the role of consumer. No page was included that put the child in the role of producer, explorer, or problem solver.

Narcissism:	***Excessive admiration of oneself***
Self-esteem:	***Pride in oneself***

Another common example of practices intended to enhance self-esteem but unlikely to do so was a display of kindergartners' work consisting of nine paper doll-like figures, each with a balloon containing a sentence stem beginning "I am special because..." The sentences depicted in the display read "I am special because I can color, "...' can ride a bike," and so forth. Although these skills are valuable, is there not some risk in encouraging children to believe that their specialness is dependent on these comparatively trivial things,

rather than on more enduring characteristics such as persistence in the face of difficulty and readiness to help their classmates?

Teachers often employ practices intended to motivate children by beginning "where they are" as teachers. However, the same intentions could be satisfied in other ways. Starting "where children are" can be accomplished by providing topics that would encourage curiosity about others and themselves, reduce emphasis on consumerism, and at the same time strengthen the intellectual character of the classroom.

Such a project was observed in a rural British lower elementary grade school. A large display on the bulletin board was titled "We Are a Class Full of Bodies." Just below the title was the heading "Here Are the Details." The display space was taken up with bar graphs of the children's weights and heights, eye colors, shoe sizes, and so forth. As the children worked in small groups collecting information brought from home, taking measurements, and preparing graphs together, the teacher was able to create a central principle of community researchers. This project began "where the children were" by collecting, pooling, analyzing, and displaying data derived from all the children in the class.

Some Developmental and Cross-Cultural Differences

In an examination of developmental considerations, Bednar, Wells, and Peterson (1989) suggest that feelings of competence and the self-esteem associated with them are enhanced in children when their parents provide an optimum mixture of acceptance, affection, limits, and expectations. In a similar way, teachers are likely to give rise to positive feelings when they provide such a combination of acceptance, limits, and expectations concerning behavior and effort (Lamborn et al., 1991).

Markus and Kitayama (1991) point out that the concept of the self varies among cultures, and that Westerners typi-

cally construe themselves as *independent*, stable entities. On the other hand, they assert that in Asia and Africa the self is viewed as *interdependent* and connected with the social context. Westerners view the self as an autonomous entity consisting of a unique configuration of traits. The Asian view is that the self exists primarily in relation to specific social contexts, and is esteemed to the extent that it can adjust to others and maintain harmony.

Helpful Approaches

The trend toward excessive emphasis on self-esteem and self-congratulation may be due to a general desire to correct earlier traditions of avoiding complimenting children for fear of making them conceited. However, the current practices described above may be overcorrections of such traditions.

Self-esteem is most likely to be fostered when children are treated respectfully and receive the right kind of positive,

meaningful feedback in the form of appreciation, rather than empty praise and flattery. Appreciation is positive feedback related explicitly and directly to the content of the child's interest and effort. A teacher might, for example, bring a new reference book to class in response to a question raised by a child. In this way, the teacher provides positive feedback without taking the children's minds off the subject. Self-esteem

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can be based on increased understanding and competence, as well as on contributing to the work of the group.

Healthy self-esteem is more likely to be developed when children are engaged in activities for which they can make real decisions and contributions than in activities that are frivolous and cute. Early childhood educators have traditionally emphasized the fact that play is children's natural way of learning (Isenberg & Quisenberry, 1988). Besides play, however, it is just as natural for young children to learn through investigation. Young children are born scientists. They devote enormous amounts of time and energy to investigating the environments in which they are raised.

Teachers can capitalize on these inborn dispositions by engaging children in investigations through project work, investigations that are in-depth studies of real topics, environments, events, and objects worthy of children's attention and understanding (Katz & Chard, 1989). In the course of such undertakings, children negotiate with their teachers to determine the questions to be answered, the studies to be undertaken, and ways of representing their findings in media such as painting, drawing, and dramatic play. Project work provides children with opportunity for discussion, decision making, cooperation, initiative, negotiation, compromise, and evaluation of the outcomes of their own efforts. In this way, children's self-esteem can be based on their contribution to the work of the group.

Children's self-esteem can also be strengthened when they have the opportunity to develop and apply criteria for evaluating their own work. For example, instead of taking work home daily, they can be encouraged to collect it for a week or more, after which the teacher can discuss possible criteria for selecting an item they wish to take home. The emphasis should not be on whether they like a piece of work, but on whether the piece includes all they want it to, or whether it is as clear or informative as they want it to be. Similarly, when children

are engaged in project work with others, they can evaluate the extent to which they have answered the questions they began with, and assess the work accomplished on criteria developed with their teacher concerning the accuracy, completeness, and interest value of their final products (Katz & Chard, 1989).

Conclusion

Practices which engage children's minds in investigating aspects of their own experiences and environments can help them develop realistic criteria of self-esteem. Such practices are more likely than trivial practices which stimulate self-preoccupation to build in children a deep sense of competence and self-worth that can provide a firm foundation for their future.

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When does it begin?

How soon do children begin to "learn through play?" Actually, learning begins in infancy. The world of play is of crucial importance to infants, toddlers, 2- and 3-year-olds, children of almost any age. It is through play that these young children learn about themselves, others and their world. It is through play that they learn physical and mental skills, form positive relationships with their parents, begin to develop their self-esteem and begin to learn their parents' values.

Through the verbal responses of parents to their children's play, infants and toddlers learn language. Through this simple play with parents, infants learn to feel love and trust—the foundation of self-esteem. Through play with toys and objects, the infant begins to learn motor and cognitive skills.

As toddlers, children begin to use their imaginations to create and to solve problems. Preschoolers learn social skills by playing with people other than their parents. Play is also the way they learn that there are rules for play and for playthings.

When parents show or tell children where and how something can be used for play, how long play can continue, and how to clean up and put toys away, they are teaching values.

When there is play between children and their parents, there is also laughter. Playfulness and laughter forge positive and lasting relationships between parents and children. Play also provides the foundation for good family communication that can prevent later problems.

Play to young children is as natural, enjoyable and necessary as breathing. Parents shouldn't just give them toys and "let them play." Make it count! Keep your ears and eyes open but avoid being too quick to interfere; children can learn so much from the process of negotiating and working problems out with playmates. Rather than dictating what should happen to settle the disagreement, ask for ideas and then, if

needed, prompt them with ideas of taking turns or using another toy until that one is available.

Simply playing at preschool?

Have you ever wondered what your child is learning by marching around the classroom waving a pompon? Ever wonder why your child insists and is probably allowed to paint every single day at preschool? Many parents have questions and concerns about the value of the activities happening in preschool. Some wonder how the things their child does in preschool will help her be better prepared for kindergarten.

First, parents need to know that early childhood educators want the same things for children as parents want: strong self-esteem and confidence, as well as skills that will help him succeed later in school. These skills are learned over time by participating in concrete learning activities in preschool. Following are some explanations that may clear up confusion about preschool activities:

☺ Some (not all) children may have difficulty understanding and following a line of print on a two-dimensional page unless they have many three-dimensional line experiences with their bodies and eyes beforehand. Children learn what a "line" is by following a line on a balance beam, by throwing and catching, by using paintbrushes, scissors, crayons and markers.

☺ Playing with puzzles, flannel boards and parquetry help children learn to focus on one point while they continue to see what is in the background. This helps train the eyes to see a word or line of print on a page full of print.

☺ When children listen carefully to sounds, identify sounds and identify the direction of sound sources, or when they play games where they match pairs of identical sounds, this helps train their ears to hear small differences in sounds. They will

need to do this to hear the differences between the sounds of letters that sound almost alike.

☺ When children hear books and stories every day, and when teachers write down their words on their art creations or in journals, children become motivated about reading and about communicating with written words.

Sometimes parents are also unsure about how children can "learn pre-reading and math skills through play," as the nursery school teacher assures them. In early childhood and elementary education, teachers do not practice the skills children will need one or two years down the road; they practice the skills the child needs NOW.

If you were a trained early childhood teacher, you would be able to observe probably 30 or more skills being practiced each day through "play." These fall into six general areas:

- Large- and small-muscle motor skills.
- Auditory and visual perception skills, necessary for further learning and reading.
- Literacy and language skills, necessary for communication of needs, thoughts, ideas, observations, and reading.
- Auditory and visual memory skills.
- Problem-solving skills such as sorting, matching, ordering, planning, categorizing, measuring, counting, experimenting, observing.
- Social skills including compromising, negotiating and making friends.

Ask your child's teacher to tell you which play activities help the child practice each of these skills. You should have a full understanding of the skills your child is learning.

Visit the center and observe your child. See how intently your child concentrates on various tasks while "playing." Your child is practicing the skills of concentration and developing a love for learning. Watch during story time. You will see your child practicing attention-span skills and developing a love of stories and books.

Good early childhood programs help children practice the skills that match their present developmental level, while providing gradual challenges to increase skills.

Instead of practicing specific skills children will need one or two years from now, teachers prepare children for future learning challenges. Their top priority is that the child will enjoy the process of learning, and feel confident and capable to learn.

These are just a few of the specific ways your child is being prepared in preschool for later learning experiences. You can and should try to reinforce all these activities at home, especially by reading aloud to your child every day. Just remember to keep your focus on enjoying your child and making learning an enjoyable experience that you can share together.

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